

Marianne Faithfull – Kissin Time (Hut)

The '60s swinger's new album features half her fan club – Beck, Jarvis Cocker and Blur – all that's missing is Kate Moss on backing vocals. *Sliding Through Life On Charm, Nobody's Fault* and *Kissin Time* are worth a listen. But for an 'intelligent' artist, her songs are seriously lacking lyrical finesse: "Suburban sh** looking for class, all queue up to kiss my a***," is about as interesting as it gets. I guess she knows exactly who her LP is aimed at. ★★★

Remy Zero – The Golden Hum (Warner)

Fresh from performing at a recent *NME* show alongside Travis and Ryan Adams, the LA-based quintet with suitably cool names like Shelby Tate and Cedric LeMoyne unleash another album upon the UK. One quick blast of the marvellously moody tracks *Bitter*, *Glorious* and *Save Me*, and you'll be hooked. ★★★★★

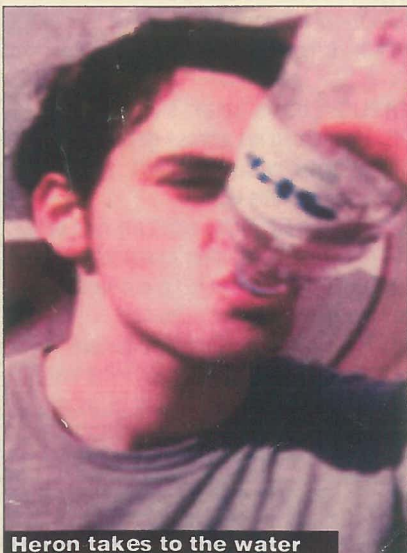
James Brown – Out Of Sight, The Very Best Of... (Universal)

James Brown has had a fairytale career: from humble beginnings picking cotton and singing gospel, he developed his own sexy brand of soulful funk that did *not* belong in church. And he's still going strong – with a new album in the pipeline. This is an excellent opportunity to sample classic grooves like *Papa's Got A Brand New Bag*, *Out Of Sight* and *Night Train*. ★★★★★

YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST

Heron – The Brown Room (Hut)

This debut album has it all, from the sublime (*J-Funk*), to the ridiculous (*Punk Mutha****a*). Rob Heron sounds a bit like Beck and Air and at times the vocal effects ape the vaudeville performances of the Kinks at their weirdest. We're going to be hearing a lot more of him over the coming months. ★★★★★



Heron takes to the water

Elbow flex their muscles

IT'S GREAT to see Elbow finally getting the recognition they deserve. Their debut album, *Asleep At The Back*, has gone gold and the title track gave them their first top 20 hit. It also landed them several Brit nominations and almost earned them 2001's Mercury Music prize (they were just beaten by PJ Harvey).

Even though they didn't actually win they say it feels good to finally be recognised by the industry. Not surprising really, when lead singer Guy Garvey describes their struggle to the top,

"Nobody was listening for a few years," he says ruefully, "I mean, family and friends were not turning up for gigs at one point."

And the dismal discovery that the day-to-day life of an aspiring young band isn't as glamorous as it's cracked up to be, led to their unanimous decision not to give up their day jobs – quite literally: "Mark (Potter) was a cook, Richard (Jupp) was a bar manager, Pete (Turner) sort of went to art college. And Craig (Potter) was a care assistant," laughs Guy, who also had his share of dodgy jobs before the band made it. "I sold double glazing after leaving school, but cleaning toilets in a nightclub was the worst."

And, as if to compound their misery, they were signed and callously dropped by more than one unsympathetic record label, before rising from the ashes to enjoy critical acclaim last year with the release of their debut album.

But with those disappointing days far behind them, Guy doesn't mind admitting

they thought of 'jacking it in' – "because it was hard enough keeping the members of the band happy, let alone an audience."

Early disappointments have served to make success all the sweeter, and the plan is to enjoy it while it lasts. "Careers in music are short," muses Guy. "The Beatles were only the Beatles for seven years." So what's his master-plan? "We've got to make as much cash as possible," he half-jokes. "I want to be working from home by the time I'm 35. I'm going to get a beautiful house with a beautiful wife and a beautiful studio, have kids and write music."

And, as if that might be a bit far-fetched he quickly adds, "The reality of it is that I'll probably have a wicked three or four years, blow all of my cash and be on the dole again!" But with songwriting skills as sharp as his, it really isn't likely. *Asleep At The Back* is out now.

Marie Keating



Elbow: a joint effort